
At least 50,000 coyotes are estimated to live in the state of Washington, and there have been a number of sightings in Clark County. No longer just a rural problem, a few coyotes have even been seen loping through Vancouver neighborhoods.

In early 2006, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reported three people suffered coyote bites. However, there has never been a documented coyote attack on a human in Clark County. A few pets have been injured or killed.

People can safely coexist with coyotes and discourage interactions with them by following a few simple guidelines recommended by Clark County's Animal Protection and Control Division. These rules are especially important for residents who live along or in the vicinity of natural habitat areas or green belts.

Never provide coyotes with a source of food. Research in national parks suggests that coyote attacks are related to the animals losing their natural fear of humans once they associate them with food. With the expansion of urban areas and other habitat changes, these intelligent animals have learned that pet food, garbage, and garden crops can



provide them with the basics for survival. Never feed any wild animal, either directly or indirectly. Don't attract coyotes by putting food out for them or leaving pet food or water outside.

Make sure your outdoor trash bins are secured so coyotes or dogs can't get into them. Use tight-locking trash cans or wrap bungee cords around them so they are not easily opened if knocked over. If you compost, be sure to use enclosed bins and never include animal matter, like meat, bones, fat, or fish scraps. These can draw coyotes even more quickly than decomposing vegetable matter.

Keep children's play areas in your existing yard free of groundcover, fruit, or birdseed that could attract small birds or mammals, a primary food source for coyotes. Keep fruit trees fenced or pick up any fallen fruit on the ground. Fruit will attract birds, and coyotes will enter your yard to catch and eat the birds. Also, keep wild bird seed in birdfeeders that are elevated or hanging above ground. Clean up any spilled seed from the ground.

If your yard is next to a green space, consider fencing it off to prevent entry by wild animals. Make sure the fencing is securely anchored and does not contain any gaps for coyotes to squeeze through. To be effective, fences should be at least six feet tall and extend at least eight inches into the ground. Consider installing a motion-sensitive lighting system.

Keep pets inside or confined securely in a kennel or covered exercise yard, especially at night. Allow only controlled access to the outdoors, such as in fenced yards or on leashes. Confine poultry in sturdy cages or pens at night.

Do not leave small children unattended in your yard or let them go outside unsupervised in woodland areas where coyotes have been spotted.

Never approach or run from a coyote. Instead, make yourself look big and shout. Teach children to respect all wildlife from a distance.

If a coyote visits your yard, make loud noises, throw rocks or sticks toward it, or spray it with a garden hose. Portable air horns, motor vehicle horns, propane cannons, starter pistols, or low-powered pellet guns can be effective. The most important thing is to help coyotes retain their natural wariness of humans.

WHO TO CALL FOR HELP

If these tactics fail and you need help with a serious coyote problem, please call Clark County Animal Protection and Control at (360) 397-2488 or fax (360) 397-2011.

For more information about coyotes, read the Living with Wildlife series on the Web site of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/coyotes.htm>.

ABOUT COYOTES

Coyotes and dogs are related. In fact, the coyote looks like a small German shepherd except that it has a narrower muzzle and bushier tail that it carries low. Ranging in size from about 20 to 35 pounds, their color varies in shades of black, brown, gray, yellow, rust, and tan.

While it is not uncommon to see coyotes during the day, they tend to be most active at dawn, dusk, and at night when their distinctive yapping, howling, and barking can be heard. Generally wary of humans, coyotes can also be quite curious and will often observe human activity from what they think is a safe distance. Despite the expansion of urban areas and other habitat changes, this adaptable species continues to thrive.



Coexisting with coyotes in Clark County



For an alternative format, contact the Clark County
ADA Compliance Office. V (360) 397-2025;
TTY (360) 397-2445; E-mail ADA@clark.wa.gov